



Sitlington Middlestown Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108157
Local Authority Wakefield
Inspection number 288034
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Elisabeth Linley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cross Road
School category	Community		Middlestown, Wakefield
Age range of pupils	3–11		West Yorkshire WF4 4QE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01924 302820
Number on roll (school)	233	Fax number	01924 302820
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr K Davis
		Headteacher	Mrs J Howell
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	13–14 September 2006	288034

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Sitlington Middlestown Junior and Infant School is average in size. Most of the pupils are White British and live nearby. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low and a below average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Sessional childcare is provided on the school's site and is managed by a private provider.

The beginning of the school year has marked a time of considerable change for the school: a new Foundation Stage unit has been established; the number of classes in Key Stage 1 has been reduced to two mixed Year 1 and 2 classes; the deputy headteacher has left to take up a headship; and the English coordinator is absent. As a result, some teachers are temporary and one is new to teaching.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In a time of change and transition, this school ensures that a satisfactory quality of education is provided for all its pupils. Sitlington Middlestown Junior and Infant School rightly celebrates its strengths but knows that more remains to be done to make sure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

When you walk into the school, you find a caring environment where pupils are valued. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength. Pupils respond well to the effective care that is shown to them: they are polite, well behaved and are concerned for others. Pupils like attending school very much: they feel safe and enjoy lessons. Pupils particularly appreciate the good range of activities that enhances their day. Sport and music are used to promote positive links with the community and such activities are planned to make learning enjoyable. Learning and fun go hand in hand in the Foundation Stage unit. The quality of provision here is of a good standard and so children make a positive start to their school life and they achieve well.

Over recent years, standards have risen in Key Stage 1, but they have remained broadly average in Key Stage 2 and this reflects pupils' satisfactory, rather than good, achievement overall. One of the reasons for this is that assessment information is not always used as well as it could be to ensure that all pupils are challenged to do their best in lessons. Sometimes, for example, the more able pupils do similar work to others rather than tackle something more difficult. However, the support and activities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well targeted at the pupils' needs and, as a result, they make good progress.

Dedication to the school is a characteristic of both the headteacher and governors. They have been faced with some difficult decisions to manage a falling roll and the subsequent impact on the school's budget. Financially, this has been handled well. However, some changes have caused unease amongst parents, for example, the need to set up mixed Year 1 and 2 classes. A minority have voiced concerns over communication with school in respect to this decision. Whilst communication with parents has improved overall, more can be done. Nonetheless, links with parents and others to aid pupils' learning, particularly those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are good.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve procedures to track pupils' progress and more changes are planned to aid the analysis of data and setting of accurate targets for all year groups. However, the changes have not yet made a consistent difference throughout school. The school has yet to focus sharply on the raising of standards in Key Stage 2 - in its planning, monitoring and evaluation - to ensure that action taken makes a difference where it is most needed. The full involvement of all staff in this process is essential and plans show that the relatively new team are to be developed in their roles. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils achieve well throughout school so that standards are raised in Key Stage 2.

- Improve the use of assessment information so that pupils are challenged consistently to do their best, particularly those who are more able.
- Improve the evaluation of the school's work so that planning for future improvement is sharply focused and measurable.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When children start school, most have skills that meet what might be expected for their age across all the areas of learning. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage and the majority reach and often exceed the nationally expected levels for their age by the start of Year 1. This good progress is maintained in Key Stage 1. Results in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 have improved since the last inspection. They have been consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics for several years because of good teaching in Key Stage 1. However, pupils' good achievement has not been sustained in Key Stage 2. Results in the national tests in Year 6 have shown this for some time. In 2006, in the Year 6 national tests, standards were broadly average but were better in English and science than they had been in the previous year. In mathematics, however, pupils did not attain well at the higher levels. Pupils who are more able do not consistently achieve well enough in lessons but those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress overall. This reflects the relative strengths of the school's provision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to say that they like coming to school and this is reflected in their consistently good attendance. Throughout the school, pupils' behaviour is good. Many pupils show real enjoyment in their learning. They are attentive to their teachers and proud of their school. They keep themselves safe, play together well and are polite and friendly. Bullying is rare and pupils say that it is dealt with quickly if it ever occurs.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know right from wrong, demonstrate great pride in their successes and develop a good understanding of their community and the lifestyles and beliefs of others. Pupils express their feelings well and value each other's efforts, particularly when working in small groups. An example of this was seen in a Year 3 mathematics lesson when pupils were keen to demonstrate their skills at partitioning numbers up to and beyond 1,000. Pupils' teamwork aids their development for the future. School councillors are eager to discharge their responsibilities effectively and are keen to have an influence on school developments.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons overall. Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting. Teaching assistants are used well, particularly to meet the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some lessons, however, learning is passive for too long and pupils are not actively engaged in activities. The pupils who are more able are not always challenged well enough and opportunities are missed for pupils to apply their skills to new tasks. This is because assessment information is not always used well enough to plan to meet their needs and some pupils are not clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Although teaching and learning overall are satisfactory, the school has good practice from which much can be learnt. For example, in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, teaching is good because teaching styles are frequently dynamic and pupils are active learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and offers a wide range of opportunities. The curriculum for the youngest pupils is good. It is lively and stimulating. Positive developments have been made in information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection, for example, in the increased provision of hardware. Pupils now need more opportunities to use their developing skills across a wider range of subjects. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of educational visits, extra-curricular activities - mostly for older pupils - and many opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Although care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, the care given to the pupils is good. A high priority is placed on securing pupils' care and welfare. Substantial time is spent in contact with agencies that provide extra support. The school works hard to ensure that all feel safe and happy. Child protection procedures are appropriate and pupils say they have adults in school they feel comfortable to talk to. Academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Individual records of pupils' academic progress are kept. However, the information gathered is not used well enough to aid the achievement of older pupils and those who are more able. Improvement is required in the setting of targets that provide sufficient challenge for individual pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. As a result of losing key post holders, some staff have taken up temporary coordinators' roles until new staff are appointed. Many of the staff are developing their management skills and this is being achieved with support and guidance from the headteacher. The school's own evaluation of its work is satisfactory. Monitoring procedures have been established and information is gathered about pupils' progress and the school's provision. Evaluation of the school's performance, however, is not yet rigorous enough and so planning for improvement, particularly to raise standards, is not as sharply focused as it should be. Financial management of the school is effective and supports planned developments for improvement, such as those seen in ICT. The school's work overall, led and managed by the headteacher and governors, is yet to make the impact necessary to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can throughout school. However, the commitment and enthusiasm of staff and governors are clear.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We visited your school to find out about the things you were proud of and what your school is doing well. We also wanted to find out where school could be even better.

What impressed us the moment we walked into your school was how polite you all are and how well behaved you are. Well done - keep this up! We were also pleased that you were keen to talk to the inspectors about the things you enjoyed. We can understand why you like the opportunities you have in music and sport and I know that your teachers are pleased too. Your school council is also setting up again for the new school year and I know you are keen to really make a difference to your school.

This year, the youngest children have a new Foundation Stage Unit. It is great fun in there and all the children are doing really well. The children in Years 1 and 2 are doing well too and this is because their teachers work hard to make lessons exciting: you get involved and you are learning lots of things. Older pupils are trying hard too. Sometimes lessons for the juniors are not quite as lively as they could be and some of you find the work too easy and grow bored.

Some of your parents are a bit worried about how school lets them know about things that are happening in school. Your headteacher and governors know this needs to be better. They are also very keen to work together to make the improvements that are needed in school. So, these are things that we think could be better in school and we would like you to work hard with your teachers to help them:

- your teachers will make sure you all have the right activities so that everyone can do really well, particularly in the junior classes
- your headteacher and governors are going to make sure that they plan carefully for the improvements needed in school that will help you do even better in your work.

We wish you all the best for the future.